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Information Bulletin

*Grade 9 English Language Arts
1995-96*

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This bulletin contains general information about the Provincial Student Assessment Program and information specific to the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. **It replaces all previous bulletins.**

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General Information

The Provincial Student Assessment Program provides teachers, parents, students, school administrators, Alberta Education, and the public with information about what students know and can do in relation to provincial standards. Group results are reported at school, district, and provincial levels to improve learning opportunities for students.

The assessments are administered in two subject areas at Grade 3—language arts and mathematics—and in four subject areas at grades 6 and 9—language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

The assessments are based on provincial standards, which reflect important learnings in the subject areas listed above. Classroom teachers from across the province are extensively involved in developing and field testing the assessment instruments.

Administering the Assessment

Information about the nature of the provincial assessments as well as their administration to special needs students can be found in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*, which is mailed each fall, to all superintendents and principals.

Schedule

The written-response component of English and French Language Arts will be administered during the last week of May. The machine-scorable component of all achievement tests will be administered during the last two weeks of June. Specific information regarding scheduling is provided in the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

To minimize any risks to security, we recommend that all students complete the

test on the same day. Superintendents approve a local schedule for achievement test administration within the dates provided. Students who are absent when the tests are administered and who return to school by the end of the school year must write the tests upon their return. By scheduling the tests early in the administration period most, if not all, absentees can be tested upon their return to school. The principal is responsible for ensuring the security of the tests.

The tests that will be administered each year are:

Grade 3

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Grade 6

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Français 6^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

Grade 9

English Language Arts (*Part A: Writing and Part B: Reading*)

Français 9^e Année (*Partie A: Production écrite and Partie B: Lecture*)

Mathematics (English and French forms)

Science (English and French forms)

Social Studies (English and French forms)

Students in French Immersion Programs

All students in French Immersion programs must write the French form of the achievement tests. Alberta Education will send a checklist to schools by January requesting an indication of how many English or French tests are required. These forms must be returned through jurisdiction offices by mid-February.

Marking Achievement Tests Locally

Teachers will be able to mark the tests before returning them to Alberta Education. Teachers can use the results as part of an individual student's year end assessment, as well as for planning instruction.

Reporting the Results

Each school jurisdiction will receive a district report and individual school reports regarding their students' achievement, as well as guidelines for interpreting these results in relation to provincial standards.

To facilitate reflection on school programs, we expect that results will be shared with all school staffs (not just teachers of grades 3, 6, and 9), as well as with parents and the community.

An individual profile for each student will be sent to the school that the student will attend in September. We also expect that these reports will be shared with parents.

Provincial results for each subject and grade will be made public in September, in documents titled *Assessment Highlights*.

Broadened Assessment Initiatives

The Student Evaluation Branch has developed additional instruments to collect a broader base of information about what students know and can do than achievement tests themselves can provide. These instruments will be administered to a provincial sample of students in all subjects on a rotating basis. The following assessments will be given in 1996:

Grade 3

- problem-solving activities in mathematics

Grade 6

- "whole book" performance-based assessment in language arts

Grade 9

- problem-solving activities in mathematics

Description of the Language Arts Assessment Standards

The provincial standards are the basis upon which we assess how well students have learned English Language Arts by the end of Grade 9. These standards reflect the essential learnings that all Alberta students are expected to achieve. Provincial standards are useful, therefore, for assessing Grade 9 students in all types of school programs—public, private, and home education.

Purpose of Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 9 students who are meeting the *acceptable standard* or the *standard of excellence* on independent work at the end of the Grade 9 Language Arts program. These statements represent the standards against which student achievement will be measured. By comparing actual results with provincial standards, decisions can be made about whether achievement is, in fact, "good enough."

Acceptable Standard

Students meeting the *acceptable standard* in Grade 9 English Language Arts are expected to demonstrate sustained interest in reading, viewing, and listening to relatively short, uncomplicated stories, documentaries, and dramatic works.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* should be able to deal with uncomplicated, familiar details and ideas that are directly presented. They should be able to expand in writing the narration of a personal experience and, depending on the context, they should be able to elaborate somewhat on their ideas and sustain a topic for several

pages of writing using appropriate but conventional details.

These students are expected to organize concrete, factual materials that contain simple ideas. They should be able to understand more complex techniques of literary structure or organization such as cause and effect, foreshadowing, flashback, and comparison and contrast. On occasion, these students are able to apply that knowledge to unfamiliar literature or apply these techniques in their own writing.

Students who meet the *acceptable standard* should be able to analyze and synthesize ideas in a familiar context when the experience is close in time to their own experiences. The expectation is that, unassisted, these students will be successful with conventional tasks, and that with conscious effort and/or assistance, they should be able to complete increasingly complex tasks.

Those students who meet the *acceptable standard* are expected to independently understand, organize, and articulate course-related ideas and concepts in a concrete, direct, personal, and relatively uncomplicated manner. They should be able to read relatively simple short novels, non-fiction selections, and narrative poems, and then clearly and correctly articulate (orally and in writing) the main idea, sequence of events, key details, and features of character and form.

Standard of Excellence

The expectation is that students who meet the *standard of excellence* in Grade 9 English Language Arts are confident learners who read widely (mystery, romance, adventure, speculative fiction, poetry) to search for information from text.

To meet this standard, students are expected to read, write, and reflect on print and non-print text from many perspectives. They should be able to deal with abstract and

complex details and ideas, and readily take risks with unfamiliar material. They should be able to analyze and evaluate ideas received from a wide variety of sources and appreciate how analysis can deepen their appreciation of the work. These students can be expected to express their analysis through a variety of modes (writing, oral presentation, drawing, dramatization) with pertinent, specific, and imaginative detail.

Students meeting the *standard of excellence* should be able to coherently develop and organize more abstract, complex material. They are expected to establish an appropriate focus for communication and select ideas and language to suit different purposes and audiences. Without teacher assistance, they should be able to identify areas in their own writing that need to be revised and/or elaborated. It is expected that their final products are essentially error-free.

These students should be able to demonstrate interest, enthusiasm, and imagination when dealing with details and ideas that demand complex thought and understanding.

Grade 9 English Language Arts Assessment

This assessment has two new prompts that are not repeated from previous years.

The Grade 9 English Language Arts Assessment is composed of two parts.

Part A: Writing consists of two writing assignments designed to be completed in two hours. Included in the total period is time for discussion before the narrative writing, and for the planning, drafting, and revising of both the narrative and functional writing. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

Part B: Reading (multiple choice), is designed to be completed in 75 minutes. Additional time of up to 30 minutes may be provided to allow students to finish.

Part B: Reading consists of 55 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, drama, poetry, and visual media. It has two booklets—one containing reading passages and one containing the questions. Answers are to be recorded on a separate machine-scorable answer sheet.

Students may use a dictionary and a thesaurus when completing **only Part A: Writing**.

Part A: Writing

Section I of the *Part A: Writing* assignment requires students to read short literary selections and then write a narrative or essay in response to some aspect of the readings that is identified in the assignment.

Section II of the *Part A: Writing* assignment is a functional piece of writing. This assignment requires the students to write for a specific audience and to fulfill a specified purpose within a given context. Specified purposes may include letters of invitation to guest speakers, requests for information, and congratulatory or thank-you letters. This part of the assignment tests students' writing skills by using "real world" situations. As in the narrative assignment, the writers' ability to adjust content, order, tone, and diction to the situation is being tested.

The booklet for *Part A: Writing* Section I includes pages labelled Planning and First Draft. Students are asked to produce only one copy of their work. They are encouraged to make revisions and corrections directly on this copy. Because of the limited testing time, it is felt that

students benefit most from spending the majority of their time in composing and revising their work, rather than perfecting a "good copy." In the past, when both draft and final copies were required, most students would just recopy their original work, paying special attention to neatness rather than to improving the content or accuracy of what they had originally written. What we now expect is a good first draft from students.

Section II includes a page labelled Planning and two lined pages for a letter, followed by a blank envelope that is to be addressed properly.

Important Information to Note!

At the beginning of the test, students will be given time to discuss both prompts with classmates in groups of two to four, or to think alone about them, and to plan their responses before beginning to write.

In the past, many students have written papers that were clearly "off topic." Please encourage your students to address the prompt.

Students may do their writing using a word processor. For information about using word-processing technology to complete the written component of the achievement test, see the draft policy in the *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

Blueprint for Part A: Narrative Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A: Section I of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) The student should be able to respond to a selection of literature and communicate that response appropriately to a specified audience.	The writing assignment is a response to a selection of literature provided in the test booklet. The student may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. The students are to respond in a narrative or essay.	The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:
*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) The student should be able to organize the response effectively and coherently to produce a unified composition that achieves his/her purpose for writing.		Meets the standard of excellence Approaches the standard of excellence Clearly meets the acceptable standard
Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively) The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.		Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard Clearly below the acceptable standard
Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience and to achieve his/her purpose.		INS insufficient
Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.		

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Blueprint for Part A: Functional Writing

The blueprint that follows outlines Part A: Section II of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test. It delineates the categories under which summary data will be reported to school jurisdictions.

Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Standards
*Content (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) The student should be able to consider the audience and be able to establish a purpose and incorporate significant information by using precise and appropriate details.	The functional writing assignment requires the student to write to a specified audience in the context of a letter. The student is expected to correctly address a blank envelope as well.	The student's achievement in each reporting category will be described according to the following standard statements:
*Organization (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) The student should be able to organize the response effectively and coherently to produce a unified letter that achieves the student's purpose for writing.		Meets the standard of excellence
Sentence Structure (structuring sentences effectively) The student should be able to use a variety of sentence types and structures to achieve clarity, interest, and emphasis.		Approaches the standard of excellence
Vocabulary (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) The student should be able to use words and expressions appropriately and effectively to communicate to the specified audience and to achieve his/her purpose.		Clearly meets the acceptable standard
Conventions (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) The student should be able to communicate clearly by adhering to appropriate spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions.		Does not clearly meet the acceptable standard
		Clearly below the acceptable standard
		INS insufficient

*These categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as each of the others.

Marking

Classroom teachers will be able to mark students' writing, using scoring guides like those in this bulletin, before returning materials to Alberta Education. Samples of students' writing that exemplify the scoring criteria will be provided to support local marking.

Marks awarded locally can be submitted to Alberta Education and used as the first reading of a student's response. The papers will then be marked centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading. Discrepancies will be adjudicated by a third reading, which will determine the final mark that a paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual student results can be reported.

All papers will be marked in Edmonton in July. The branch will contact superintendents in the spring for their recommendations of markers. The approximately 170 Grade 9 teachers selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta. Markers will be junior high school teachers selected from those whom superintendents have recommended as markers to the Student Evaluation Branch. To qualify for recommendation by a superintendent, a prospective marker must be currently teaching Grade 9 Language Arts, have taught it for at least two years, have a

permanent Alberta teaching certificate, and be employed by a school jurisdiction at the time of marking. Markers will be contacted in May. The list of markers will be finalized no later than June 15. Group leaders will meet before the marking session.

Confirming Standards

Confirming standards is a process in which some teachers who are selected for marking are asked to make judgements about the achievement test to answer the question of whether province-wide performance is good enough. For more information on the confirming standards process, refer to the *Provincial Student Assessment Program Provincial Report, June 1993 Administration*. For information on the selection of teachers for participation in the confirming standards process, refer to the current *General Information Bulletin, Provincial Student Assessment Program*.

Sample Writing Assignments

The sample assignments that follow are similar in format and content to the assignments that will appear on the 1996 Grade 9 English Language Arts *Part A: Writing* component. Adequate space for planning and writing will be provided in the writing booklet. These sample assignments are for classroom use.

Grade 9 Achievement Test
English Language Arts
Part A: Writing

To The Teacher:

Read this page to your students.

Description

- This test consists of **two** sections.
- You will have 10 minutes in total for discussion about the prompt in each section.
- **Section I**, contains some material for you to read and then respond to in writing.
- We suggest that you take about 70 minutes to complete section I.
- When you have finished Section I, go on to section II.
- **Section II**, describes a situation that you must respond to in letter format.
- We suggest that you leave approximately 40 minutes to write the letter.
- ***Time: 2 hours. You may take up to an additional 30 minutes to complete the test.***

Instructions

- Before beginning to write, you will have 10 minutes to talk with your classmates (in groups of two to four) about the writing assignments, or to think about them alone.
- Jot down your ideas and/or make a plan before you write. Do this on the ***Ideas/Planning*** page.
- Write in blue or black ink on the lined pages provided.
- You are to do only one copy of your writing. Remember that you may neatly make changes and corrections directly on this writing.
- You may use an English Language dictionary and/or a thesaurus.
- Your work will be evaluated on ***what*** you say and ***how well*** you say it (on **Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions**).

Sample Writing Assignment—Narrative Writing

WRITTEN RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

Read and consider the following material, and then complete the writing assignment that follows.

A Threatened Planet The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972 under the chairmanship of Canadian Maurice Strong, first brought to world attention the deteriorating health of the world environment.

Canada is a member of many international organizations that try to improve the health of the world's environment.

In its 1987 report, the World Commission on the Environment and development, said that we must accept the limits imposed by nature. We cannot hope to survive if we exceed those limits.

—*Junior Encyclopedia of Canada*

Earth Day was first celebrated in 1970 to promote awareness of global environmental issues and respect and appreciation for all of nature. Individuals, businesses, and industries are urged to try to reverse the damage that has been done to the environment—to stop harmful industrial practices; to stop pollution of the air, water, and soil; to practice conservation; and to explore alternative resources.

The Price

All over the world,
Trees disappear.
People cut forests,
Too quickly, I fear.
Animals suffer.
So let's stop this vice,
Or else in the end,
We'll all pay the price.

—*Laura Greeson, age 13*

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Treat the earth well—
it was not given to you by your parents . . .
it was lent to you by your children.

Kenyan proverb

Write about some things that can be done by you personally, by other concerned individuals, or by municipalities, provinces, or even our country, to help ensure that the Earth that you leave to future generations is in the best possible condition.

Your response should be in the form of a story or essay.

You may draw from:

- your personal experiences
- materials on page 9
- other materials you have read
- television programs you have seen
- class discussions you have had

When writing, be sure to:

- **Consider** your audience
- **Focus** on your purpose
- **Organize** your writing appropriately in sentences and paragraphs
- **Budget** your time
- **Proofread** and correct your work

Scoring Guide—Narrative Writing

Content

Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a purpose
- chooses ideas
- supports the response
- considers the reader

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and sustained. • The ideas used by the writer are carefully chosen and perceptive. • Supporting details are precise and often creative. • The writing captivates and holds the reader's interest, and is creative and/or original.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and generally sustained. • The ideas used by the writer are thoughtful. • Supporting details are relevant and specific. • The writing engages and holds the reader's interest.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is established but may not be sustained. • The ideas chosen by the writer are appropriate but conventional. • Supporting details are relevant but general. • The writing generally holds the reader's interest.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is vaguely established and may not be sustained. • The ideas chosen by the writer are superficial. • Supporting details are scant and/or vague and/or irrelevant. • The writing does not hold the reader's interest.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer's purpose may be unclear; if a purpose is stated or can be implied, it is not sustained. • The ideas chosen by the writer are inappropriate. • Supporting details are irrelevant, inappropriate, and/or lacking. • The writing is confusing and/or frustrating for the reader.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: *Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.*

Organization

Focus

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writing demonstrates

- focus
- coherent order
- connections between events and/or details
- closure

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is purposeful and interesting, and it clearly establishes an appropriate focus that is sustained throughout. • Events and/or details are arranged in paragraphs, in a purposeful and effective order, and coherence is maintained. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, effectively connect events and/or details within sentences and between paragraphs. • Closure is evident and purposeful.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is purposeful and clearly establishes an appropriate focus that is generally maintained throughout. • Events and/or details are arranged in paragraphs, in a purposeful order, and coherence is generally maintained. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, appropriately connect events and/or details within sentences and between paragraphs. • Closure is appropriate and related to the focus.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is functional and establishes a focus that may be inconsistently maintained. • Events and/or details are arranged in a discernible order, although coherence may falter occasionally. • Transitions tend to be mechanical and may be used inconsistently within sentences and/or between paragraphs. • Closure is related to the focus but may be mechanical and/or artificial.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction may lack purpose and/or may not be functional; any focus established by the writer may not be maintained. • The arrangement of events and/or details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently. • Transitions, within sentences and/or between paragraphs, are lacking or may be inappropriate. • Closure may be unrelated to the focus.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction, if present, is not functional or is inappropriate; no focus is established. • The arrangement of events and/or details is haphazard and incoherent. • Transitions are not used within sentences or between paragraphs. • Closure is inappropriate, unconnected, or missing.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Sentence Structure

Focus

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length
- variety of sentence beginnings

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled. • Sentence type and length are consistently effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are varied.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is controlled. • Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are often varied.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled, but may occasionally impede meaning. • Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and/or varied. • Some variety of sentence beginnings is evident.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure sometimes lacks control, and this can impede the meaning. • Sentence type and length are rarely effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, often impede meaning. • There is little variety of sentence beginnings.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure generally lacks control, and this often impedes meaning. • There is no deliberate variation of sentence type or length; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if present, severely impede meaning. • There is no variety of sentence beginnings.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Vocabulary

Focus

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider the

- accuracy of the words and expressions selected by the writer
- effectiveness of the words and expressions selected by the writer
- appropriateness and effectiveness of the writer's voice/tone

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used accurately and deliberately to fulfill the writer's purpose. • Specific words and expressions are used to create vivid images and/or enrich details. • The writer's voice/tone is confident, appropriate, and enhances the meaning.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used appropriately and often effectively. • Specific words and expressions show some evidence of careful selection and some awareness of connotative effect. • The writer's voice/tone is clear and appropriate.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are generally used accurately. • General words and expressions are sometimes used when specific words would have been more effective. • The writer's voice/tone is discernible but may be inconsistent or uneven.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific words, if present, are frequently misused. • General, rather than specific, words predominate. • The writer's voice/tone is not clearly established or is inappropriate.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General words that convey only vague meanings are used. • The writer's voice/tone is not evident.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Conventions

Focus

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 9 narrative writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, indenting for new speakers, etc.) and grammar (agreement of subject–verb/pronoun–antecedent reference, etc.)
- clarity and flow of the communication

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is enhanced because it is essentially error-free. • The relative absence of error is impressive considering the complexity of the response.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is sustained because it contains only minor convention errors. • Any errors that are present do not reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is maintained through generally correct use of conventions. • Errors that are present may reduce the clarity or interrupt the flow of the communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is weakened by the frequently incorrect use of conventions. • Many of these errors reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is limited by the consistently incorrect use of conventions. • These errors severely reduce the clarity and interrupt the flow of communication.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Sample Writing Assignment—Functional Writing

Read the information below, and then complete the assignment that follows.

The Situation

The students' union of your school, Thomasville Jr. High, is planning an assembly and luncheon to honour all those who have volunteered during this year in your school. As a students' union member, you are responsible for writing to one volunteer, Pat Jones, to invite him/her to attend the special assembly and luncheon on June 21, 1996.

ASSIGNMENT

Write a letter to Pat Jones. Amongst other details, be sure to:

- **include** the reason for the assembly and luncheon
- **include** the time Pat Jones should arrive at the school and where he/she should go upon arrival
- **mention** that lunch will be provided after the assembly
- **ask** Pat Jones to reply to the school office by June 14, 1996
- **sign** your letter Kelly Brown (**do not** use your own name)
- **follow** letter format
- **address** the blank envelope provided

School Address

652 3 Avenue North, Southfork, Alberta T2H 3Z4

Pat Jones's Address

7541 98 Street, Botsford, Alberta T9V 3B8

Content

Focus

When marking **CONTENT** appropriate for Grade 9 functional writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- establishes a purpose
- incorporates significant information
- uses precise and appropriate details
- demonstrates an awareness of audience

<p>Meets the Standard of Excellence</p> <p>5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose and the writer's situation are clearly established. • Significant information is presented to support the purpose. • The information is enhanced by precise and appropriate details that effectively fulfill the purpose. • An awareness of audience is clearly and effectively sustained.
<p>Approaches the Standard of Excellence</p> <p>4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose and the writer's situation are established. • Important information is presented to support the purpose. • The information is substantiated by appropriate details that fulfill the purpose. • An awareness of audience is clearly sustained.
<p>Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard</p> <p>3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose is established. • Sufficient information is presented to support the purpose. • The information is supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose. • An awareness of audience is generally sustained.
<p>Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard</p> <p>2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose is vaguely established. • Essential information may not support the purpose. • The information is supported by a few insignificant and/or irrelevant details that only partially fulfill the purpose. • An awareness of audience is evident but not sustained.
<p>Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard</p> <p>1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose is unclear. • Essential information to support the purpose is missing. • If details are present, they are inappropriate, providing poor support for the information; thus, the purpose is not fulfilled. • Little awareness of audience is evident.
<p>INS INSUFFICIENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has written so little that it is not possible to assess the content.

Note: *Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.*

Organization

Focus

When marking **ORGANIZATION** appropriate for Grade 9 functional writing, the marker should consider how effectively the writer

- introduces the purpose of the writing
- follows a coherent order for requested information
- brings closure to the writing

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is effective, interesting, and clearly establishes the purpose and direction for the writing. • Requested information is arranged in a purposeful and effective order and coherence is consistently maintained. • The conclusion brings effective closure to the writing.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction clearly establishes the purpose and the direction for the writing. • Requested information is arranged in a purposeful order and coherence is generally maintained. • The conclusion brings appropriate closure to the writing.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction generally establishes the purpose and direction for the writing. • Requested information is arranged in a mechanical order. • The conclusion brings adequate closure to the writing.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction provides little information. • The arrangement of requested information is not clearly discernible and coherence falters frequently. • The conclusion is abrupt or awkward.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction may be confusing. • The arrangement of requested information is haphazard and incoherent. • The conclusion, if present, is inappropriate.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other categories.

Sentence Structure

Focus

When marking **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** appropriate for Grade 9 functional writing, the marker should consider the

- writer's control of sentence structure
- effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length
- variety of sentence beginnings

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is consistently controlled. • Sentence type and length are consistently effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are varied.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is controlled. • Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are often varied.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled, but may occasionally impede the meaning. • Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and varied. • Some variation of sentence beginnings is evident.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is sometimes lacking control, and this can impede the meaning. • There is little variation of sentence type and length. • There is little variation of sentence beginnings.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally lacking control, and this severely impedes the meaning. • There is no variation of sentence type or length. • There is no variation of sentence beginnings.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content

Vocabulary

Focus

When marking **VOCABULARY** appropriate for Grade 9 functional writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer uses

- words and phrases accurately and effectively
- specific words and expressions appropriate to a request made in a business letter

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used consistently accurately and effectively. • Specific words and expressions appropriate for the context are consistently used.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used accurately and often effectively. • Specific words and expressions appropriate for the context are frequently used.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used appropriately. • General words and expressions are sometimes used where specific words and expressions, appropriate for the context, would have been more effective.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are generally used appropriately. • General rather than specific words and expressions, which are not always appropriate for the context, predominate.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are sometimes misused. • General words and expressions that are inappropriate for the context and that convey only vague meanings are used.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content

Conventions

Focus

When marking **CONVENTIONS** appropriate for Grade 9 functional writing, the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, indenting for new speakers, etc.) and grammar (agreement of subject-verb/pronoun-antecedent reference)
- application of business letter and envelope format skills
- clarity and flow of the communication

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered

Meets the Standard of Excellence 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is enhanced because it is essentially error free. • The letter and envelope are essentially free from format errors. • Errors, if present, do not interrupt the clarity or flow of the communication.
Approaches the Standard of Excellence 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is sustained because it has only minor convention errors. • The letter and envelope contain few format errors. • Errors that are present do not interrupt the clarity or the flow of the communication.
Clearly Meets the Acceptable Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is maintained through generally correct use of conventions. • The letter and envelope contain occasional format errors. • Errors that are present rarely interrupt the clarity and the flow of the communication.
Does Not Clearly Meet the Acceptable Standard 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is weakened by the frequently incorrect use of conventions. • The letter and envelope contain frequent errors in format. • Errors often interrupt the clarity and the flow of the communication.
Clearly Below the Acceptable Standard 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is limited by the consistently incorrect use of conventions. • The letter and envelope contain numerous and glaring format errors. • Errors severely interrupt the clarity and the flow of the communication.
INS INSUFFICIENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing has been awarded an INS for Content

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test consists of 55 multiple-choice questions* based on reading selections from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual media.

The sample questions on pages 24 to 35 appeared on the June 1995 Achievement Test, (all other questions on this test are secured). These released questions, along with questions from previous bulletins, can be used to prepare students for the current Achievement Test.

These questions illustrate the nature and complexity of those that will appear on the 1996 test, although the emphasis may be slightly different. The blueprint showing the approximate number of questions in each category appears on the next page.

Development

Reading selections are chosen according to the following general guidelines:

- Reading selections, whenever possible, should be relatively short but should be complete works containing a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Reading selections should reflect the interests of the majority of Grade 9 students.
- Reading selections should be of appropriate difficulty for Grade 9 students.
- Canadian content should be used extensively.

The following considerations guided question development:

- Questions relating to each reading selection should be arranged from specific to general, wherever practical.
- Questions should test the student's ability to understand and analyze the reading selections and to make judgements about their form and content. Only questions dealing with significant aspects of the reading selections should be asked.

** All Grade 9 Achievement Tests will consist of 55 questions.*

Reading Blueprint

The blueprint for *Part B: Reading* shows the reporting categories and language function under which questions are classified. The number of questions in each category is approximate.

Part B: Reading Grade 9 Language Arts Achievement Test

Reporting Category	Question Distribution by Language Function		Number of Questions	Percent of Test
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic		
Main Ideas/Details The student should be able to construct meaning by attending to and interpreting ideas/details related to format cues and character (actions, motives, and values), setting, events, and conflict.	4	8	12	22
Organization of Ideas and Relationships between Form and Content The student should be able to demonstrate an understanding of literary forms and of the relationship between the author's intention and point of view and choice of form and writing style, and choice of organizational methods such as chronological order, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, foreshadowing, and flashback.	5	10	15	27
Associating Meaning The student should be able to associate meanings of words and expressions from prior knowledge and contextual clues, understand the denotations and connotations of words and expressions, and determine the meaning and effect of figurative language.	3	8	11	20
Synthesizing Ideas The student should be able to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and/or predict plausible outcomes by synthesizing information from an entire reading selection.	5	12	17	31
Total Number of Questions	17	38	55	100
Percent of Test	31	69	100	100

Sample Reading Questions

- I. Read the excerpt from “Nellie McClung: A Patient Suffragist” and answer questions 1 to 9.

NELLIE McCLUNG: A PATIENT SUFFRAGIST

Nellie McClung became interested in women's rights and a group called the WCTU, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, after many discussions with her mother-in-law. Her first efforts to gain signatures on a petition for women's rights ended the way her first touch with politics ended — with people laughing at her.

- 5 Unwilling to allow failure to deter her, however, Nellie McClung turned to writing. Her mother-in-law encouraged her to submit a short story to a magazine contest by doing her housework for her. She received favourable comments for her story from the magazine (but not the prize) and as a result she expanded her story into her first book, *Sowing Seeds in Danny*. The book became a runaway bestseller in 1908 and sold well over 100,000 copies. Suddenly Nellie
10 McClung had become a name to watch.

- Although Nellie already had a family of four sons and a daughter, she turned back to some of her earlier concerns. At the turn of the century, women had no right to vote and they also lost control of any money they had when they married. To Nellie McClung and many other women this seemed a grave injustice. Nellie plunged into the suffrage struggle by making countless
15 speeches. “The great army of women workers are ill-paid, badly housed, and their work is not honoured or paid for,” she complained. She became an eloquent speaker and slowly the women of Manitoba began to unite in her cause.

- Perhaps Nellie McClung's most famous public appearance took place in the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg on January 28, 1914. On that night Nellie staged a mock parliament to poke fun at
20 the Manitoba provincial government's attitude toward women's rights. Nellie reversed the real-life situation on stage and had men begging for the right to vote while she, as premier, refused their questions for the same silly reasons that the government had recently given to women. The put-on was brilliant and the show was not only financially successful, it also made the cause of women's rights known and acceptable to many. Nellie McClung used laughter as her lever and
25 the Walker Theatre was filled with converts. In 1916, in Manitoba, the women's suffrage bill was passed in the legislature.

- Nellie McClung and her family moved further west to Edmonton in 1912, and she immediately set about to improve the rights of women in Alberta. Elected to the legislature in 1921, she helped women win the right to sit in the Senate, which they hadn't been able to do
30 previously because the word “persons” in the British North America Act of 1867 had been interpreted to mean only “men.”

- Nellie continued to write novels of pioneer life on the Prairies. These captured the attention and sympathy of many readers. Her books also took the form of serious social criticism and her arguments often contained specific attacks on the nature of Canadian society. She spoke harshly
35 about everything from land speculators to charity systems, and suggested full employment and economic security as two of the worthiest goals Canadian society could have. She believed the greatest injustice that had been done to the human race was the economic dependence of women. She believed this had to be rectified.

Terry Angus and Shirley White

1. The phrase “A Patient Suffragist” suggests that Nellie McClung was
 - A. persistent
 - B. passive
 - C. unhealthy
 - D. intimidated

2. The word “eloquent” in line 16 means
 - A. extravagant
 - B. long-winded
 - C. interesting
 - D. fluent

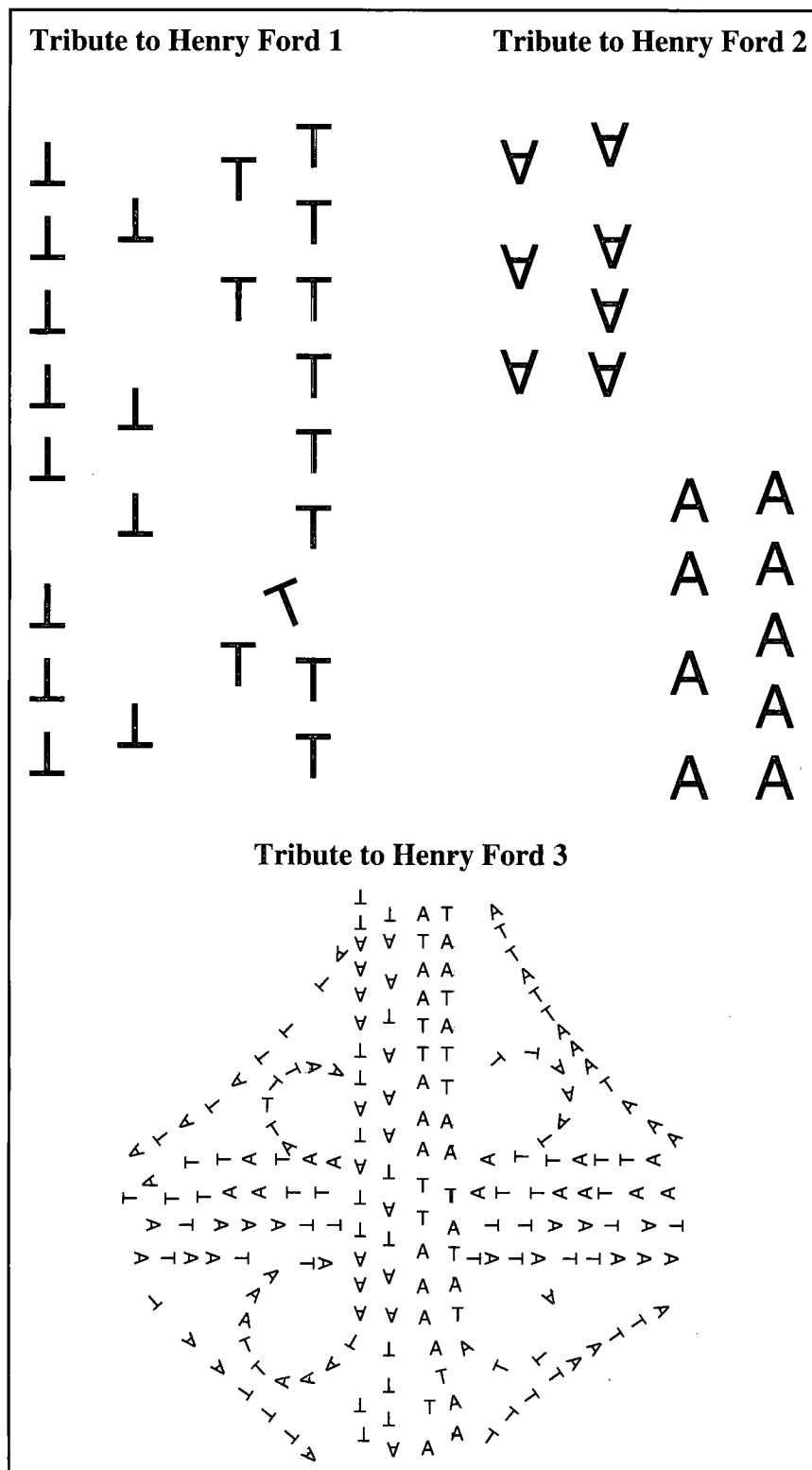
3. The **most effective** method Nellie McClung used to gain widespread support for her cause was
 - A. writing petitions
 - B. role reversal
 - C. public speaking
 - D. running for parliament

4. According to this article, the strongest opposition to Nellie McClung’s suffragist movement came from
 - A. her own sense of obligation to her family
 - B. her husband and mother-in-law
 - C. the government
 - D. other women

5. According to this article, Nellie McClung believed that
 - A. economic independence for women was important
 - B. women should be paid for housework
 - C. women should be prevalent in politics
 - D. Canada’s laws should favour women

6. According to this article, the turning point in the suffragist movement was Nellie McClung's
- A. publication of her book, *Sowing Seeds In Danny*, in 1908
 - B. petition for women's rights
 - C. election to the legislature
 - D. staging of the mock parliament on January 28, 1914
7. The authors' attitude toward Nellie McClung seems to be one of
- A. contempt
 - B. admiration
 - C. envy
 - D. tolerance
8. Nellie McClung's actions were motivated by
- A. her desire to have her book published
 - B. the Women's Christian Temperance Union
 - C. the unfairness of the law for women
 - D. her desire to become famous
9. Based on this article, the word that **best** describes Nellie McClung is
- A. self-righteous
 - B. dedicated
 - C. self-serving
 - D. humorous

II. Examine "Tribute to Henry Ford 1, 2, 3" and answer questions 10 to 12.



10. What modern scenes do these concrete poems represent?
- A. Highway driving
 - B. Highway menaces
 - C. Traffic patterns
 - D. Traffic jams
11. The **most** appropriate reason for the increasing complexity of the poems is that automobiles are
- A. more sophisticated
 - B. beneficial to our lifestyle
 - C. too numerous
 - D. complicating our lives
12. What do the "T's" and "A's" represent in this poem?
- A. Trucks and automobiles
 - B. Different car models
 - C. Different car sizes
 - D. Traffic and automation

- III. In recent years, our relationship with nature has drawn increasing attention. Read the poems "Every Part of This Earth Is Sacred" and "Words to a Grandchild," and then answer questions 13 to 18.

EVERY PART OF THIS EARTH IS SACRED

Every part of this earth is sacred . . .

Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy . . .

All things are connected.

- 5 Teach your children that the earth is our mother.
Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth.
This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know.
Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it.
10 Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

—Chief Seattle

WORDS TO A GRANDCHILD

Each day brings an hour of magic.

Listen to it!

Things will whisper their secrets.

You will know

- 5 what fills the herbs with goodness,
makes days change into nights,
turns the stars

and brings the change of seasons.

some of nature's wise ways

- 10 beware of your complacency
for you cannot be wiser than nature.

You can only be as wise

as any man will ever hope to be,

— if you let it happen.

—Chief Dan George

13. In "Words to a Grandchild," the author writes "Things will whisper their secrets" (line 3). In "Every Part of This Earth is Sacred," these "things" could be
- A. men, mothers, and children
 - B. the sons of the earth
 - C. strands in the web of life
 - D. pine needles, sandy shores, and insects
14. In the poem "Words to a Grandchild," the pronoun "it" in line 14 **most likely** refers to
- A. listening to the hour of magic
 - B. being responsible to your fellow man
 - C. studying the change of the seasons
 - D. being sensitive to nature
15. In the poem "Every Part of This Earth Is Sacred," the phrase "sons of the earth" (line 6) refers to
- A. human beings
 - B. children
 - C. environmentalists
 - D. native leaders
16. The theme of the poem "Every Part of This Earth Is Sacred" is
- A. apathy toward life
 - B. reverence for the earth
 - C. the harshness of nature
 - D. joy in nature
17. The authors of these two poems speak with the
- A. enthusiasm of the young
 - B. innocence of children
 - C. wisdom of the mature
 - D. enthusiasm of the elders
18. These poems would appeal **most** to people concerned with
- A. our environment
 - B. developing resources
 - C. unravelling nature's secrets
 - D. the previous generation

IV. Examine this cartoon and answer questions 19 and 20.



19. In the first frame, Peppermint Patti **most likely** is
- A. hoping Snoopy can help her with her problems
 - B. reflecting upon all the things that have gone wrong recently
 - C. trying to get attention from Snoopy because no one else will give her any
 - D. sitting down to escape her problems for a while
20. The advice Snoopy gives to Peppermint Patti is that she should
- A. talk with a friend
 - B. show that a kiss makes people happy
 - C. listen to a friend in need
 - D. show people that she cares for them

V. Read "Sarah Tops" and answer questions 21 to 27.

SARAH TOPS

I came out of the Museum of Natural History and was crossing the street on my way to the subway, when I saw the crowd about halfway down the block; and the police cars, too. I could hear the whine of an ambulance.

5 For a minute, I hesitated, but then I walked on. The crowds of the curious just get in the way of officials trying to save lives. Dad, who's a detective on the force, complains about that all the time.

I just kept my mind on the term paper I was going to have to write on air pollution for my eighth-grade class, and mentally arranged the notes I had taken during the museum program on the subject.

10 Of course, I knew I would read about it in the afternoon papers. Besides, I would ask Dad about it after dinner. He sometimes talked about cases without telling too much of the real security details.

After I asked, Mom looked kind of funny and said, "The man was in the museum when he was killed."

15 I said, "I was working on my term paper. I was there first thing in the morning."

Mom looked very worried. "There might have been shooting in the museum."

"Well, there wasn't," said Dad, soothingly. "This man tried to lose himself there and he didn't succeed."

"I would have," I said. "I know the museum, every inch."

20 Dad doesn't like me bragging, so he frowned a little and said, "They didn't let him get away entirely—caught up with him outside, knifed him, and got away. We'll catch them, though. We know who they are."

He nodded his head. "They're what's left of the gang that broke into that jewelry store two weeks ago. We managed to get the jewels back, but we didn't grab all the men. And not all the 25 jewels either. One diamond was left. A big one—worth \$30,000."

"Maybe that's what the killers were after," I said.

"Very likely. The dead man was probably trying to cross the other two and get away with that one stone for himself. They turned out his pockets and practically ripped off his clothes, after they knifed him."

30 "Did they get the diamond?" I asked.

"How can we tell? The woman who reported the killing came on him when he was still just barely alive. She said he said three words to her, very slowly, 'Try—Sarah—Tops.' Then he died."

"Who is Sarah Tops?" asked Mom.

35 Dad shrugged. "I don't know. I don't even know if that's really what he said. The woman was pretty hysterical. If she's right and that's what he said then maybe the killers didn't get the diamond. Maybe the dead man left it with Sarah Tops, whoever she is. Maybe he knew he was dying and wanted to have it off his conscience."

"Is there a Sarah Tops in the phone book, Dad?" I asked.

40 Dad said, "Did you think we didn't look? No Sarah Tops, either one P or two Ps. Nothing in the city directory. Nothing in our files. Nothing in the FBI files."

Mom said, "Maybe it's not a person. Maybe it's a firm. Sarah Tops Cakes or something."

Continued

"Could be," said Dad. "There's no Sarah Tops firm, but there are other types of Tops companies and they'll be checked for anyone working there named Sarah."

45 I got an idea suddenly and bubbled over. "Listen, Dad; maybe it isn't a firm either. Maybe it's a *thing*. Maybe the woman didn't hear 'Sarah Tops' but 'Sarah's top'; you know, *top* that you spin. If the dead guy has a daughter named Sarah, maybe he gouged a bit out of her top and stashed the diamond inside and—"

50 Dad grinned. "Very good, Larry," he said. "But he doesn't have a daughter named Sarah. Or any relative by that name as far as we know. We've searched where he lived and there's nothing reported there that can be called a top."

"Well," I said, sort of let down and disappointed, "I suppose that's not such a good idea anyway, because why should he say we ought to *try* it? He either hid it in Sarah's top or he didn't. He would know which. Why should he say we should *try* it?"

55 And then it hit me. What if—

I said, "Dad, can you get into the museum this late?"

"On police business? Sure."

"Dad," I said, kind of breathless, "I think we better go look. *Now*. Before the people start coming in again."

60 "Why?"

"I've got a silly idea. I—I—"

Dad didn't push me. He likes me to have my own ideas. He thinks maybe I'll be a detective too, some day. He said, "All right. Let's follow up your lead."

65 We got there just when the last purple bit of twilight was turning to black. We were let in by a guard.

I'd never been in the museum when it was dark. It looked like a huge, underground cave, with the guard's flashlight seeming to make things even more mysterious.

70 We took the elevator up to the fourth floor, where the big shapes loomed in the bit of light that shone this way and that as the guard moved his flash. "Do you want me to put on the light in this room?" he asked.

"Yes, please," I said.

There they all were. Some in glass cases; but the big ones in the middle of the large room. Bones and teeth and spines of giants that ruled the earth, millions of years ago. I said, "I want to look close at that one. Is it all right if I climb over the railing?"

75 "Go ahead," said the guard. He helped me.

I leaned against the platform, looking at the grayish plaster material the skeleton was standing on.

"What's this?" I said. It didn't look much different in color from the plaster.

"Chewing gum," said the guard, frowning. "Those darn kids—"

I said, "The guy was trying to get away and he saw his chance to throw this—hide it from the gang—"

80 Dad took the gum from me, squeezed it, and then pulled it apart. Inside, something caught the light and flashed. Dad put it in an envelope and said to me, "How did you know?"

I said, "Well, look at it."

85 It was a magnificent skeleton. It had a large skull with bone stretching back over the neck vertebrae. It had two horns over the eyes, and a third one, just a bump, on the snout. The nameplate said: Triceratops.

Isaac Asimov

21. What had the narrator been doing at the museum?
- A. Researching dinosaurs
 - B. Checking out a murder
 - C. Working on a term paper
 - D. Visiting an exhibit
22. The man had hidden in the museum because he
- A. was trying to get away from his gang
 - B. had stolen a diamond from the museum
 - C. was trying to get away from the museum guards
 - D. had looked for Sarah Tops
23. The murder took place
- A. beside the dinosaur exhibit
 - B. outside the jewelry store
 - C. near the police station
 - D. outside the museum
24. The woman who found the dying man **most likely** felt
- A. distressed
 - B. indifferent
 - C. calm
 - D. anxious
25. The phrase "It looked like a huge, underground cave" (line 66) is an example of
- A. metaphor
 - B. simile
 - C. suspense
 - D. exaggeration

Continued

26. In the phrase “Dad put it in an envelope” (line 81), “it” refers to

- A. chewing gum
- B. dinosaur bone
- C. a note
- D. a jewel

27. “Try—Sarah—Tops” actually refers to a

- A. dinosaur
- B. secret code
- C. cake store
- D. toy

Key and Descriptors for Sample Reading Questions

Ques.	Key	Language Function	Reporting Category	Curriculum Standard	Examples of Assessment Standard*
1	A	Informational	Associating meaning	Infer the meaning of a phrase from its context in a passage	A
2	D	Informational	Associating meaning	Infer the meaning of a phrase from its context in a passage	A
3	B	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Make a judgement about character motivation by synthesizing information presented	A
4	C	Informational	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of character in a passage	A
5	A	Informational	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of character in a passage	A
6	D	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information in a passage	E
7	B	Informational	Organization of ideas	Understand the attitude conveyed by the author in a passage	A
8	C	Informational	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of character motivation in passage	A
9	B	Informational	Synthesizing ideas	Make a judgement about character values by synthesizing information in a passage	A
10	C	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion by relating what he/she knows to new information in a concrete poem	A
11	D	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion by relating what he/she knows to new information in a concrete poem	E
12	B	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion by relating what he/she knows to new information in a concrete poem	E
13	D	Narrative/ poetic	Organization of ideas	Evaluate different uses for the same word in a poem	E
14	D	Narrative/ poetic	Associating meaning	Infer a pronoun referent from its context in a poem	A
15	A	Narrative/ poetic	Associating meaning	Recognize word connotations beyond their literal meaning in a poem	A
16	B	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information in a poem	E
17	C	Narrative/ poetic	Main ideas/details	Interpret key details that would suggest the author's tone in a poem	E
18	A	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Make a generalization by synthesizing information in two poems	E

19	B	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Make a judgement about character motivation by synthesizing information in a cartoon	E
20	D	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion by synthesizing information in a cartoon	E
21	C	Narrative/ poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of character motivation in a passage	A
22	A	Narrative/ poetic	Organization of ideas	Understand a cause/effect relationship in a passage	A
23	D	Narrative/ poetic	Main ideas/details	Locate key details of setting in a passage	A
24	A	Narrative/ poetic	Synthesizing ideas	Draw a conclusion about character motivation by synthesizing key information in a passage	A
25	B	Narrative/ poetic	Associating meaning	Recognize examples of figurative language in a passage	A
26	D	Narrative/ poetic	Associating meaning	Infer a pronoun referent from its context in a passage	A
27	A	Narrative/ poetic	Main idea/details	Locate key details in a passage	A

*A—Students meeting the acceptable standard should be able to correctly answer questions such as these.

E—In addition to answering the questions identified for the acceptable standard, students meeting the standard of excellence should be able to correctly answer questions such as these.

Preparing Students for the Assessment

I strongly advocate preparing children to understand tests and testing through extensive class discussion about the makeup of the test and how to take it, and then adequate practice to find out their own particular weaknesses in approaching tests.

—Graves, p. 183

We hope that teachers will share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

Have students do the sample questions included in this bulletin. Then, have students share strategies they used to answer the questions.

In 1991, the Student Evaluation Branch published a document entitled *Samples of Students' Writing*. These samples came from the student responses on the 1990 Language Arts Achievement Test. Share these samples and the accompanying commentaries with students.

Also, familiarize students with the scoring guides given in this bulletin. With instruction, students may be able to use the guide effectively when evaluating their own writing or that of peers.

Part A: Writing

Have students:

Plan their available time carefully. We suggest that they use all the time available to them to carefully *read* the assignment and *think* about what they are being asked to do, to *plan* their writing so that it is focused, unified, and coherent, and to *proofread* their writing. Students will have two hours to complete the assignment.

Read all the instructions carefully and do what the assignment asks them to do. The time they spend in reading and thinking about the assignment is time well spent. Many students find that highlighting or underlining key words in the assignment helps them to focus on what is expected.

Plan their writing using the pages provided. They should choose a planning strategy that helps them to focus their ideas. They may want to try:

- webbing
- using a chart
- listing (main ideas, character, etc.)
- using a plot outline (diagram)
- using a RAFTS model (role, audience, focus, topic, strong verb)

Use their reference materials. They are allowed the use of a dictionary and a thesaurus when writing Part A. They should use a dictionary to look up the meanings of words that they want to use but are not completely sure about, and ensure that they spell words correctly by looking them up. A thesaurus can be useful if they need to find a more precise word for the context they are developing, but students should be careful not to overuse the thesaurus.

Keep in mind the characteristics of effective writing:

- Awareness of audience (appropriateness of tone and use of correct language)
- Completeness of information (enough detail to fulfill purpose)
- Relevance of information (all details pertain to the purpose)
- Clarity of information (all details are specific and easily understood by the reader)

Proofread their work and correct errors directly on their first draft. They should double-space if they think it will allow them to make corrections more easily.

Part B: Reading

Have students:

Read the material using the strategy that works best for them. Either

- read the selection and think carefully about it before they attempt any of the multiple-choice questions associated with the reading selection; *or*
- read the questions first and then read the selection, keeping in mind the questions they will need to answer.

Each set of multiple-choice questions is designed to take them back through the reading selection in a certain way. The questions are ordered according to the location of the answers in the passage. For example, the answer to the first question will likely appear near the beginning of the passage and so on. Questions relating to the reading selection as a whole will appear at the end of the set of questions.

Consider all forms of information provided. Information will be presented not only in words but also in visual forms such as cartoons, pictures, or charts.

Take the time to reread the lines that are referred to in the question. Many questions contain quotations from the selection, with line references indicated. It is always worthwhile to reread the lines that are referenced and to consider the meanings of these lines in both their immediate context and the context of the selection as a whole.

Read carefully all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that they think is best. Some of the questions are designed to test their ability to make a judgement. These questions will always include a bold-faced qualifier in their stems, such as **best**, **most strongly**, or **most clearly**. All of the alternatives (A, B, C, and D) are, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the reading selection into account or can be supported most strongly by reference to the reading selection.

Work from partial knowledge when it is appropriate to do so. If a correct or best answer does not become obvious to them fairly quickly, they may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use their judgement to select an answer from those that remain.

Parts of a Business Letter

The diagram illustrates the components of a business letter within a rectangular frame. The parts are numbered as follows:

- 1**: Three horizontal lines for the address.
- 2**: Three horizontal lines for the salutation.
- 3**: A single horizontal line for the subject line.
- 4**: A vertical line on the left side of the main body, indicating the margin.
- 5**: Two horizontal lines for the closing.
- 6**: Two horizontal lines for the signature.

The main body of the letter is represented by a large area of horizontal lines between the subject line and the closing.

Format of a Business Letter

The following information is provided because this is the first year that a functional piece of writing has been part of the achievement test. This information should help you as you prepare your students for the test.

There are three basic business letter formats. The block format that follows is the preferred format for the test. In this format, all parts of the letter run along the left side of the page. No paragraphs in the body are indented, but an extra space is left between paragraphs.

Parts of the **Business Letter** (see previous page)

1. Heading

The heading consists of your address and the date.

501 Spring Street
Regina SK R3T 4N7
January 3, 1996

2. Inside Address

The inside address consists of the name and address of the person to whom you are writing. It usually appears four lines below the heading if a word processor is used, or one line below if it is hand-written.

Sam Hunt, Director
The Knitting Mill
1409 3 Avenue
Toronto ON L3V 7O1

3. Salutation

The most traditional salutation or greeting for a business letter is *Dear* followed by Mr., Ms., Mrs., or Miss and the person's last name, and ending with a colon.

Dear Mr. Smith:
Dear Ms. Black:
Dear Mrs. Brown:
Dear Miss Green:

4. Body

The body is the main part of the letter, in which you write what you have to say to the person. Skip one line after the salutation.

- Get to the point. After a brief greeting, "get down to business."
- Business letters are usually formal, so the language that you use should also be formal.

5. Closing

The closing is the ending to your letter. It appears in the bottom left corner of the letter, directly under the body. Only the first word in the closing should be capitalized. It is always followed by a comma.

Yours truly,
Sincerely,

6. Signature

The signature is your full name signed. Your signature should appear directly below the closing. It should always be written in ink.

7. Commonly Used Abbreviations for Provinces and Territories

Province	Symbol
Alberta	AB
British Columbia	BC
Manitoba	MB
New Brunswick	NB
Newfoundland	NF
Northwest Territories	NT
Nova Scotia	NS
Ontario	ON
Prince Edward Island	PE
Quebec	QC or PQ
Saskatchewan	SK
Yukon	YT

Addressing an Envelope

The diagram shows a rectangular envelope with a horizontal line across the top. In the top left corner, there are three horizontal lines for the return address, labeled with a circled '1'. In the center of the envelope, there are four horizontal lines for the mailing address, labeled with a circled '2'.

1. **Return Address**

The return address is the name and address of the person sending the letter. The return address appears in the top left corner of the envelope and consists of your name, street address, city or town, province, and postal code.

JEAN BROWN
13 SPRING RD
TORONTO ON L2R 3V6

2. **Mailing Address**

The mailing address is the name and address to which the letter is being sent. It always appears in the centre of the envelope. In a business, letter the address on the envelope is the same as the inside address of the letter. There may be separate lines for the title of the addressee (Editor, Director, President), the division or department the person works in, and the name of his or her company, business, or organization.

SAM HUNT
DIRECTOR
THE KNITTING MILL
1403 3 AVE
TORONTO ON L3V 7O1

Note: *Envelope format follows Canada Post's preferred guidelines, January 1994.*

Credits

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Donald H. Graves, *Build a Literate Classroom* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1991), p. 183.

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